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ABSTRACT

The theoretical premises and social science research used to justify integration as a strategy for the improvement of the quality of education of black children are examined in this paper. Literature focusing on the results of integration/desegregation is also reviewed. It is concluded that many of the theoretical premises used to justify the integration model for achievement of quality education for black children are invalid, and that research does not justify a continued emphasis on integration as a viable approach to solving the educational problems of this group. Viable alternatives are suggested for the involvement, on a theoretical and applied level, of black social scientists in the education of black children. (Author/CMG)

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INTEGRATION: DEAD HORSE FOR THE RACE?

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Abstract

The theoretical premises and social science research used to justify integration as a strategy for the improvement of the quality of education of African-American children are examined in this paper. Literature focusing on the results of integration/desegration is also reviewed. It is concluded that many of the theoretical premises used to justify the integration model of achievement of quality education for African-American children are invalid, and that research does not justify a continued emphasis on integration as a viable approach to solving the educational problems of African-Americans. Viable alternatives are suggested for the involvements of African-American social scientist on a theoretical and applied level regarding the focus of quality education achievement.

The quest for integration of America's schools is an effort that was initiated by the NAACP in the early 1930's (Rabin, 1976) and culminated in the celebrated 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka Kansas decision. Social science statements played a prominent role in this decision, as indicated by this quotation from a finding in the Kansas case (347. U. S.Reports)[1]:

> Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to (retard) the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system (394).

It was added that "whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of Plessy vs. Ferguson, this finding is amply supported by modern authority." (U. S. Reports, 347, p. 394).

Given the current debate on legislative and legal levels about this four plus decade issure and the advances in social science theory, research, and practices during this same period; it is felt that this issue merits re-examination. The thrust of this paper is the examination and critique of the social science research used to support the 1954 Supreme Court decision.

Theoretical Implications

In the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas court opinion, several "authorities" were listed as references for the social science perspective (Brameld, 1949; Chein, 1949; Clark & Clark, 1950; Deutscher & Chein, 1948; Frazier, 1949; Myrdal, 1944). The rationales of these authorities merit individual inspection.

Brameld (1949) suggested that segregated facilities are more costly than integrated facilities, due to duplication of services. He also referred to statistics which indicated that much more money is allocated for teacher salaries and educational facilities in Euro-American institutions. He additionally indicated that education in African-American educational facilities was inferior, and noted that they tended to be vocational in their educational thrust. He also alluded to the psychologically detrimental effects of "social neurosis" as a result of their being thwarted from goal directed behavior (Brameld, 1949, p. 45).

Chein (1949) and Deutscher and Chein (1948) echo Brameld's opinions (although this may be stated as vice-versa, since Brameld references Deutscher and Chein's survey). In both of the aforementioned sources a poll was used, consisting of:

> eight hundred and forty-nine social scientists, including the entire membership of the American Ethnological Society..., and the Division of Personality and Social Psychology of the American Psychological Association, and all of the members of the American Sociological Society who listed race relations or social psychology as their

major field of interest (Chein, 1949, p. 231).

It is interesting that this method was used, given that Chein (1949) stated:

> I have myself had occasion to argue in another connection that facts are not established scientifically by holding a poll among scientists concerning their preferences (p. 230).

Yet such a poll was used, as Chein (1949) stated:

> For our present purposes, it is sufficient to note that 90% of the respondents indicate their opinion that enforced segregation has detrimental psychological effects on the members of the segregated groups even though equal facilities are provided (p. 231).

Kenneth B. and Mamie P. Clark were referenced in the Proceedings of the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth titled "Personality in the Making" (Witmer & Kotinsky, 1952, p. 142). Examination of the Clark's work circa this era reveals an assessment methodology based on African-American children's responses to crayon drawings or their responses to evaluative questions regarding dolls with variances in skin color. The Clark's research indicated that African-American children tended to make pro-Euro-American and anti-African-American responses to the examiner's varying inquiries, and concluded that these results were evident of the effects of racism and segregation. This particular research methodology has been critiqued concerning its implications (Baldwin, 1979, Banks, 1976, Brand, Padilla, and Ruiz, 1974; Semaj, 1980; Ukombozi, 1980),

and it has been generally concluded that other than the evidence of outgroup orientation, the negative inferences concerning the personality or psychological structure of these children is unfounded.

Although the majority of the ill-effects of segregation were posited toward Afrikan-American children, there were effects that were considered as mutually harmful to African-American and Euro-American children (Minnesota Law Review, 1953)[2], with the following conclusions:

> Segregation imposes upon individuals a distorted sense of social reality.
>
> Segregation leads to a blockage in the communications and interactions between the two groups. Such blockages tend to increase mutual suspicion, district and hostility.
>
> Segregation not only perpetuates rigid stereotypes and reinforces negative attitudes toward members of the other group, but also leads to the development of a social climate within which violent outbreaks of racial tension are likely to occur (p. 432).

These tenets were prefaced by a definition of segregation, which was:

> ...segregation refers to that restriction of opportunities for different types of associations between the members of one racial, religious, national or geographic origin, or linguistic group and those of other groups, which results from or is supported by the action

of any official body or agency representing some branch of government. (p. 428)

The points of questionable validity regarding the research presented in the Brown decision have already been mentioned. However, the points of validity also merit mentioning. It is conceptually plausible that segregation (as previously defined) might lead to a blockage in communication and interaction, with a resultant increase in suspicion and hostility. It is also conceivable that segregation might perpetuate rigid stereotypes and reinforce negative attitudes resulting in the aforementioned social neurosis or frustration spoken of by (Brameld, 1949, p. 45). Perpetuation of racist attitudes by the dominant Euro-American society would seem to be the root of this particular problem, given that Euro-Americans are the only parties guilty of socially sanctioned segregation and racism. They are also responsible for the self-negating socialization process afforded to African-Americans, part of which was the denial of education. This process was historically known as "seasoning" (Quarles, 1964, p. 26), which often resulted in "Mentacide" (Wright, 1976), which he defined as the systematic destruction of the identity and culture of a group. Therefore, it is also plausible that African-American children might suffer from out-group oriented conceptuatizations of positive attributes or beauty. The previously mentioned inadequate allotment of funding and/or access to quality education was part and parcel of the same process.

Given that the segregation process did result in inadequate allotment of funds, as well as some psychosocial problems that affected Euro and African Americans, it would seem logical to attempt to remedy these problems. Since the vast majority of these psycho-social problems can be attributed to racism, it would seem logical to deal with the elimination of this as a problem. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Euro-Americans have historically denied, or sanctioned and supported racism. Euro-American social scientists themselves have often lent their support to the functional end of racism, as Thomas and Sillen (1972) have well documented. It would also seem logical to address the inadequate allocation of resources, but adequate redress in this area has been woefully lacking. It is a historical fact that African-Americans have never been reparated for the ravages of the war commonly known as the slave trade, which was (is) the root of the psycho-social and economic problems of African-Americans (Ukombozi, 1978, Shucter, 1970). Direct reparative redress might have more adequately addressed the goal directed behavior of African-American parents: access to the acquisition of knowledge and skills which can reinforce the positive group identity and enable the recipient to contribute to the defense and development of the race. What has happened in actuality is far from adequate.

Theory Into Practice

Based on the aforementioned theoretical premises, desegregation

became law, with integration as the solution. Given that many of the theoretical premises upon which this law was based are of questionable validity, one might ask why has this practice received the sanctioning from Afrikan-Americans which it has. It would seem like a very insulting concept to accept, that is, that Afrikan-American children cannot get a "quality" education in the absence of Euro-American children. The aforementioned process of mentacide gives an explanation for this. This quote from syndicated columnist Tony Brown (1981) speaks to this issue:

> They remember when blacks were forbidden to be with whites; now they seem to be attempting to fulfill their need for self acceptance with the status condition of being with and liked by whites, i.e. integration and busing at any and all costs to black parents and children.

This type of mentality is in line with the concept of anticipatory socialization. Berkowitz (1975) explained the behavioral consequences of this phenomenon, in which a person adopts the values and belief system of another group:

> A person is in a very precarious position if he has low status in his group or isn't well accepted by the others, and he is afraid that he might be excluded altogether. Clinging to his precious foothold in the group, maybe even hoping he can better his position, he walks the straight and narrow, not daring to deviate openly from the group's standards (p. 331).

It is no accident that this type of leadership and mentality

have dominated the social political arena of Afrikan-Americans, as they have tended to be well financed by whites. It is a historical fact that the NAACP was formed based on a convening of Euro-Americans (Rabin, 1976). Euro-American racists who wish to control their commodity of once chattel slaves without the chains and whips previously used understand the critical function of mind control as well as rewards and punishments. This partenalistically racist attitude which mentacidal Afrikan-Americans support has resulted in the NAACP's thrust to eliminate "segregated not substandard schools" (Straus and Schrager, 1978).

The legal application of desegration has also been questioned. Former NAACP attorney, Derrick Bell Jr., (1976) has stated:

> Desegregation efforts aimed at lunchrooms, beaches, transportation, and other public facilities were designed merely to gain access to those facilities. Any actual mixing has been essentially fortuitous; it was hardly part of the rights protected (to eat, travel, or swim on a non-racial basis)(p. 477).

So, although the concern of Afrikan-Americans had been access to quality educational facilities, the practice became the ensurance of race mixing. This is also understandable, given the aforementioned mentality of Afrikan-Americans in leadership positions, as well as Euro-American's historic efforts to control. One of the potential benefits of integration referenced in the Brown decision was that there were less race-riots in integrated neighborhoods (Minnesota Law Review, 1953).

Given all the aforementioned theoretical and legal

considerations, it becomes privy to examine whether integration has accomplished or rendered its intended benefits. One might ask, how can you assess the results of efforts based on less than sound theoretical premises? Unfortunately, the soundness of theory often has no bearing on the application. Assessment of the end results of this process have often been difficult, because the state of integration often fades. As Bell (1976) stated:

> ...the disinclination of white parents to send their children to black schools has not been lessened by charges made over a long period of time by civil rights groups that black schools are educationally bankrupt and unconstitutional per se (p. 479).

Consequently, predominantly Afrikan-American schools would often return to their predominantly Afrikan student population due to European resistance. Interestingly enough, there has been more resistance to recent efforts in the North. This is similar to the phenomenon which occured after the Civil War, when the North, supposedly for humanitarian reasons, backed the release of the slaves. The "humanitarianism" faded when the newly freed Afrikans competed for the jobs that whites held.

In those situations in which integration has been achieved, the results have been inconclusive. St. John (1975) indicated that integration process sometimes resulted in raising of scores, but sometimes resulted in the lowering of scores. Her study also concluded that desegregation lowered the self-esteem and the educational and vocational aspirations of the Afrikan-American

Children involved. Weinberg's (1977) review of the literature in this area also indicated inconclusive results, as Thomas and Brown's recent literature review further supports (1982).

There have also been studies that negate the premise that a predominantly Afrikan-American educational setting is inferior. In Chicago, Operation Higher Achievement involved parents, teachers, and students in a project that resulted in an improvement of reading scores on an average of 1.1 years per term (Newsweek, 1976). The same types of results have been documented in New York (Arthur v. Nyquist, 1976), and California (Bell, 1973). Thus there is a substantial body of literature which supports the thesis which has been supported by a vocal minority of Afrikan-Americans, that is, that Afrikan-American children have, will, and can achieve in predominantly Afrikan-American settings.

With aforementioned evidence, it seems that there is a definite need for priority setting in the Afrikan-American community. We have spent 28 years trying to whip the proverbial dead horse to win the race. As indicated by a recent University of Michigan study, Europeans have tended to change their behavior, while in settings which bring them in contact with Afrikan-Americans, but not their actual attitudes. So for those Afrikan-Americans who felt that they could change Euro-Americans racism by mere proximity, they have found themselves confronted with unwilling subjects. And for those who felt (feel) that their children would gain through osmosis by association with Euro-Americans, this has not proven to be valid. What is a reality is

than the vast majority of Afrikan-children are still presented with a Eurocentric, inadequate, educational opportunity.

Soulutions

There are some viable alternatives to this continued non-productive effort. There are already alternative independent Afrika.. educational institutions in operation. These tend to be limited in funding, support, and focus, due to the lack of will and ability for the masses of Afrikan-Americans to support them. A more viable solution is for Afrikan-American social scientists to challenge this effort, to educate Afrikan-American parents to the false claims of this effort, and to become actively involved in designing Afrikan-American educational institutions that are truly Black, that is, in population, as well as an emphasis on Afrocentric teaching methods and culture reinforcements. It is time that we stopped treating ourselves as the children of Euro-Americans, and demanded what is rightfully ours. There have already been such efforts in Boston (Newsweek, 1976), New York (Guttentag, 1972), and St. Louis ("Parents File Motion Against Deseg Plan, 1983).

Only we will decide if we will stop beating the dead horse, and get on a horse that has a chance of winning.

Notes

1) 347. U. S. Reports.

2) Minnesota Law Review, 37, 427-439.

3) Arthur vs. Nyquist, 415. F. Supp. 904, (W.D.N.Y. 1976).

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